

SUBSISTENCE

Goal: Provide for, "... The continuation of the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural residents of Alaska..." (Public Law 96-487 –Dec. 2, 1980, Sec. 801)

Objectives: To evaluate and consider the needs of subsistence users in making project land management decisions by using the subsistence monitoring report template. The "template," developed in 1999, is available outline. This outline was designed to organize and display subsistence monitoring information in order to consider the effects of management activities on subsistence users.

Background: The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA, 1980) requires a priority for subsistence uses by rural residents on Federal public land in Alaska. Since 1990, the Federal Government has been managing wildlife resources for subsistence use on Federal public lands through the Federal Subsistence Board. In 1999, the Federal Government also began to manage fish resources in navigable streams on Federal public land.

Several pieces of legislation and regulations provide the framework for our legal responsibilities. These are:

- Title VIII of ANILCA,
- Federal subsistence regulations (36 CFR 242 and 50 CFR 100),
- Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), and
- Federal Advisory Committee management regulations (41 CFR 101-6).

Since 1999, the Forest Service has developed investigative projects designed to evaluate the condition of fish stocks important to subsistence fisheries, gather and evaluate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in several key subsistence areas, and evaluate the consistency of various existing fish harvest regulations.

Subsistence Question: Are the effects of management activities on subsistence users in rural Southeast Alaska communities consistent with those estimated in the 1997 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)?

Southeast Regional Advisory Council provided subsistence comments to the Forest Service on current planning efforts for the Tongass Land Management Plan Adjustment. The effects of management activities on subsistence users are not consistent with the estimates provided in the 1997 Forest Plan. Effects were estimated based on proposed timber harvest projections in 1997. In many cases the effects are considerably less than the estimates. This is due in part to the closing of the two large sawmills in Ketchikan and Sitka. The resulting reduction of annual timber harvest reduced the associated affects on subsistence resource habitats. Similarly, affects on subsistence users varies across the Forest and is documented through the use of 810 analyses and hearings on proposed management activities at the project level. The results of these analyses are not inconsistent with 1997 Forest Plan estimates.

Considerations of effects of the Forest Plan on subsistence can be characterized in three categories: abundance and distribution of resources, access by rural users, and competition with non-rural users. Section 810 of ANILCA requires an evaluation of the potential effects of land use activities on subsistence uses. Evaluations include consultations with tribes, informal meetings with community leaders, informal public open houses, formal 810 hearings, Fish and Game Advisory Board meetings, Regional Advisory Council meetings, other organized group board meetings, and teleconferences.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA, 1980) requires a priority for subsistence uses by rural residents on Federal public land in Alaska (Title VIII). Since 1990, the Federal Government has been managing resources for subsistence use on Federal public lands through the Federal Subsistence Board. In 1995, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the existing scope of the subsistence program should be expanded to include "...those navigable waters in which the United States has an interest by the virtue of the reserved water rights doctrine." Subsistence management of these waters became effective in October 1999.

Section 812 of ANILCA directs the Departments of Interior and Agriculture, cooperating with the State of Alaska and other Federal agencies, to research fish and wildlife subsistence uses on Federal public lands. To increase the quantity and quality of information available for management of subsistence fisheries, the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program was created within the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM). The Monitoring Program was envisioned as a collaborative inter-agency, inter-disciplinary approach to enhance existing fisheries research, and effectively communicate information needed for subsistence fisheries management on Federal public lands.

Since its inception in 2000, over 200 monitoring and research projects have been funded through the Monitoring Program to support Federal subsistence fisheries management throughout the State of Alaska. A total of 36 fisheries assessment and TEK projects at a total cost of ~\$8.9 million have been funded under the Monitoring Program in Southeast and Yakutat (Southeast Region). Most of these projects (22) and funds (~\$6.6 million) were directed at estimation and assessment of sockeye salmon escapements for stocks that sustain subsistence fisheries. This investment strategy is consistent with issues and information needs for the Southeast Region as identified and prioritized by the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council:

1. Traditional Ecological Knowledge
2. Harvest Monitoring
3. Salmon assessment, particularly sockeye salmon and coho salmon
4. Assessment of fish species (other than salmon) important to subsistence use; particularly Prince of Wales steelhead and Behm Canal eulachon.

Monitoring Results and Evaluation of Results

In 2006, ten projects are already funded. Most of these were approved as part of the 2004 Monitoring Plan and most projects address assessment of salmon stocks or subsistence fisheries for salmon. Most of the Monitoring Program is directed at assessment of sockeye escapements that support subsistence fisheries for salmon. Additional

assessment of Prince of Wales Steelhead and salmon harvest surveys in Sitka were added in subsequent years.

Three Forest projects were approved for funding in 2006; two were stock status and trends projects and the third was a harvest monitoring/traditional knowledge project. The projects met the technical requirements but there were insufficient funds to fund all three.

Kutlaku Lake Stock Assessment was fully funded. The other two projects will be implemented during 2007.

Guidelines to evaluate future studies were developed in 2006 as a Strategic Plan for the Subsistence Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. Within the 5-year planning horizon for this document, the need for continuation of assessments will be evaluated. An important consideration for continued assessments of strategically important stocks is whether the research objectives promote continuation of subsistence uses. Several projects now have 3 or more years of data. Part of the strategic planning process is assessing the need for additional data with existing systems or initiating new monitoring plans for systems with limited or nonexistent data.

During 2006 the second year of funding was provided for the first year of the field studies phase to estimate the abundance of deer on Prince of Wales and surrounding islands (Game Management Unit 2). This study is designed to evaluate the benefits and efficiency of conducting deer population assessments using genetic technology. The study is a cooperative project between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the University of Alaska and the Hydaburg Cooperative Association.